



USAID's Bagh Activity



USAID's Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity Annual Report 2014 / Year 1

USAID's Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity (Bagh)

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1 Acronyms

ACF	Assistant Conservator of Forests
AIG	Alternative Income Generation
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BCAS	Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies
BTAP	Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forest
CF	Conservator of Forest
CMC	Co-Management Committees and Councils
CMO	Co-Management Organization
COP	Chief of Party
CREL	Climate Resilient Ecosystem and Livelihoods
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
EU	European Union
FD	Forest Department
FTRT	Forest Tiger Response Team
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GTI	Global Tiger Initiative
HTC	Human Tiger Conflict
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
MEP	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RFP	Public Private Partnerships
SAC	Special Awards Conditions
SEALS	Sundarbans Environment and Livelihood Support
SI	Smithsonian Institution
SAR	Staff Appraisal Report
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TPP	Technical Project Performa
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VCF	Village Conservation Forum
VRTT	Village Tiger Response Team
WCS	World Conservation Center
WWF	World Wildlife Federation

2 Introduction

USAID's Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity (Bagh) contributes to tiger conservation in the Sundarbans Reserved Forests (SRF), with the overall goal of conserving biodiversity of Bangladesh. Bagh is a four-year project implemented by the Forest Department (FD) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), through a consortium of partners led by WildTeam.¹

The technical support agreement for Bagh was awarded on November 9, 2013 by USAID/Bangladesh through Cooperative Agreement No. AID-388-A-14-00001. The Bagh agreement provides for technical advisory services and other support to be provided over a four year period (2014-2018) to the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) Forest Department responsible for the conservation of the forests including the SRF, which comprises nearly half of the country's total forests.

This is the first annual report of the Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity (Bagh) and it summarizes the progress (including accomplishments and challenges faced) during the period from January 15, 2014 -- January 14, 2015.

Annexes for this report include selected photo stories, list of completed technical reports and assessments.

The Sundarbans Reserved Forest (SRF): The Sundarbans is the largest contiguous mangrove forest remaining in the world of which nearly 60% of the forest is in Bangladesh and 40% in the neighboring Indian state of Paschimbanga. It provides the last remaining wildlife habitat for important wildlife species, notably the Royal Bengal Tiger. The area is internationally recognized under the Ramsar convention, to which Bangladesh is a signatory, and includes three wildlife sanctuaries, encompassing 139,698 hectares, which were gazetted in 1996 and have been declared as 'World Heritage site' by UNESCO in 1997.

The SRF in Bangladesh covers three districts (Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerghat) and the FD manages it through the Khulna Circle that has 2 Forest Divisions, 4 Ranges (Chandpai, Sharankhola, Khulna and Satkhira), 17 Stations and 72 patrol camps, and engage around 1,000 FD staff. The SRF is of national and global importance because of its unique biodiversity, shelterbelt from climatic shocks and source of livelihood for about 3.5 million landscape populations².

Bagh works with the government, local community stakeholders and civil society partners at the national and field level to conserve tiger and biodiversity of the Sundarbans. The

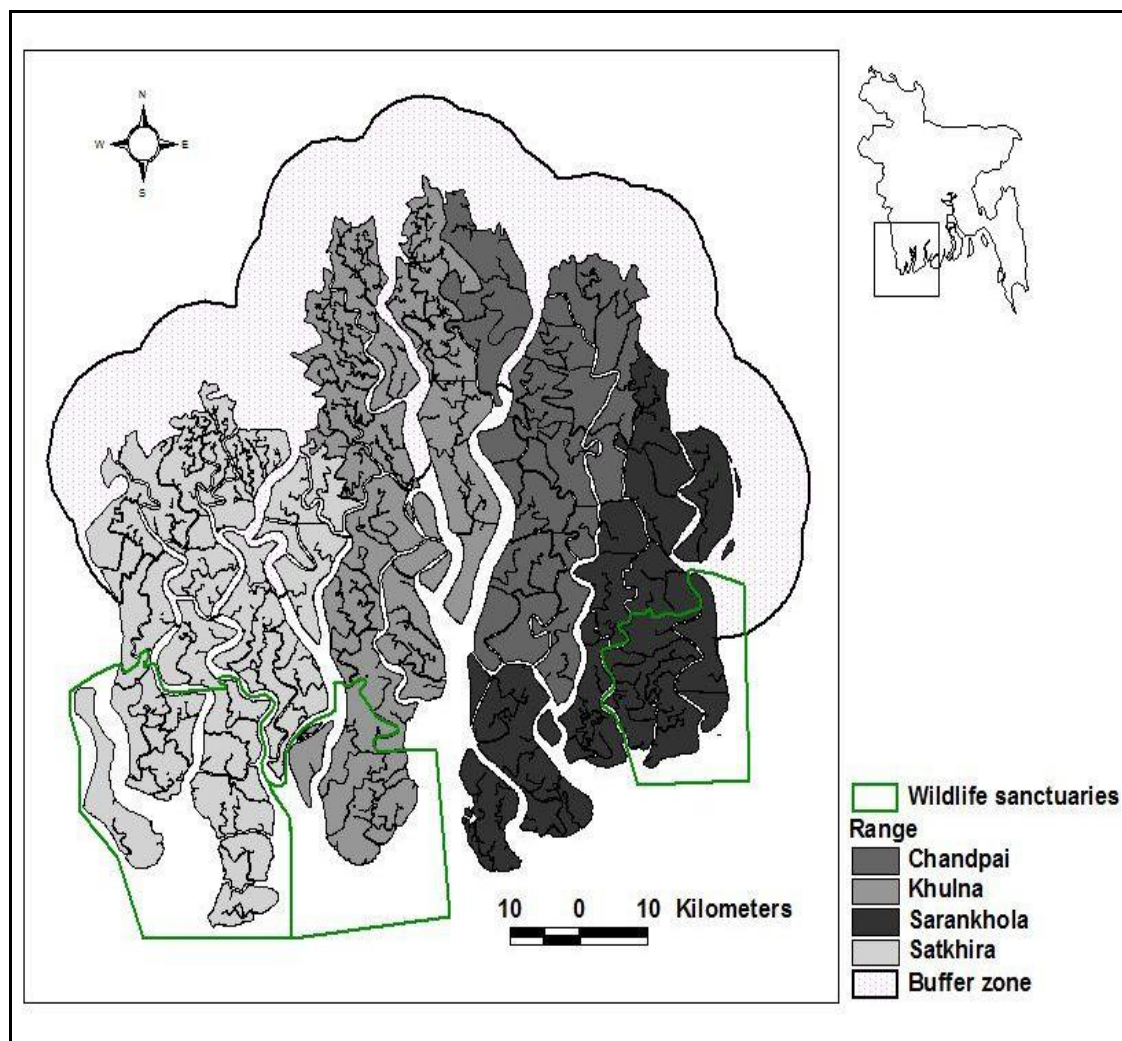
¹ In addition to WildTeam, the Bagh consortium include the Smithsonian Institution (SI) and Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

² Biswas, S.R., Choudhury, J.K., Nishat, A., Rahman, M. 2007. Do invasive plants threaten the Sundarbans mangrove forest of Bangladesh? Forest Ecology and Management 245: 1-9

project is implemented through a matrix management approach that includes management and technical support from the Dhaka office and field-level for tiger conservation in the Sundarbans. The accompanying map (Figure 1) identifies Bagh activity area.

To ensure sustainability of its objectives Bagh works through five integrated components focusing on tiger conservation. While each of the five technical components is presented separately, implementation is necessarily integrated and emphasizes sustainability of tiger conservation and its habitat to achieve long-term integrated conservation and management results for the tigers and the Sundarbans.

Figure 1: Bangladesh Sundarbans



3 Bagh summary of progress in year one, 2014

3.1 Project implementation

There were six high priority actions of Bagh Project in Year one. Highlights of each of these priority actions are provided below:

1. Complying to Special Award Conditions (SACs):

The USAID's Bagh Activity Cooperative agreement (CA) was awarded to the WildTeam on November 9, 2013 with an effective start-date of January 15, 2014. The CA included SACs based off of the pre-award survey³ conducted in 2013 which focused on WildTeam's strengths and weaknesses in six areas: legal structure; financial management and internal control systems; procurement systems; human resources systems; project performance management; and organizational sustainability. The SACs outline a number of remedial measures that WildTeam must comply to address capacity gaps in the following key topics/areas:

- (i) Financial Management;
- (ii) Procurement Management
- (iii) Human Resource Management
- (iv) Project Management
- (v) USAID Grants Management

As part of its effort to support WildTeam, on 1st March 2014, USAID contracted Mr. Peter Welch as a Financial Advisor for a one month, to provide technical assistance directly to WildTeam aimed to improve its technical and operational capacity. Mr. Welch provided technical services to initiate building the systems, protocols and thus policy manuals, required for effective project management. He also initiated the write-up of several manuals, including the financial policies and procedures, procurement, grants, human resources, human resources handbook, projects and general policy⁴. The Bagh Finance Specialist along with WildTeam Head Office finance and administrative team worked hard to complete all the manuals and developed templates and procedures to implement the policies. During Quarter two, USAID/Bangladesh OFM team met with WildTeam Finance and Administration team to review the progress and compliance to SACs.

To date, WildTeam has accomplished putting systems in place responding to more than 90% of the SACs and has worked diligently with UNOPS, a USAID Bangladesh partner, to

³USAID uses the tool called "Non-US Organization Pre-Award Survey", or "NUPAS". This survey determines a non-US organization's ability to manage, control, account for and report on the use of the funds provided to its project, in accordance with the US Government and USAID requirements.

⁴Two additional supporting manuals were developed in Year 1: USAID Compliance manual and Disaster Recovery Training Manual.

improve the capacity of USAID local implementing partners, such as WildTeam. In early 2015, UNOPS reviewed the SACs with WildTeam and USAID in numerous meetings, and finalized their work plan for supporting WildTeam in their endeavor to become an effective USAID-implementing partner (Annex I).

2. Project start-up and Project Launch:

Staffing: During the first quarter, the WildTeam was successful in timely recruiting and having on board two key personnel of the project including the Chief of Party (CoP), the and the Finance and Procurement Specialist (FPS). They also hired the Conservation Manager (CM). Together, this team set up the project offices, office systems and procedures. Following the WildTeam HR policy manual, staff contracts were prepared and new staff recruitment notices were given in local newspapers for hiring project staff. Finance and Grants Manager who joined after 2 months started immediately working on setting up financial systems and procedures. Finance and administrative team worked very closely with the USAID Finance consultant responsible for the finalization of different manuals in compliance to SACs. Some of the other tasks that were accomplished were opening bank accounts, developing budget and financial details for TPP and AWP, procurement of office equipment and set up, and sending grant advance requests to USAID. In January 2014, a Law Enforcement Specialist joined at Khulna under the Panthera cost-share arrangement to support Component 2 activities. This allowed for work to be completed quickly under the wildlife crime information management training module and an in-house Training of Trainers throughout Year 1.

Bagh made significant progress in establishing project offices in Dhaka, Khulna and four range offices within the first two quarters of Year One, and deploying minimum staff required for initiating the project activity. A lease was signed in March 2014 for the current Bagh office in Gulshan 2 in Dhaka and rental agreements also were signed for office space in Khulna and the four range offices by the end of Quarter 1.

However, the resignation of the COP in June 2014 caused a temporary vacuum in leadership of the project. With approval from USAID, WildTeam put in place a temporary arrangement by appointing an acting COP while recruiting a new COP. The new COP was able to join on 15th November 2014.

In accordance with the USAID-Bangladesh RFA-388-13-000008 under the Section I, Subsection G 'Special Consideration', Page 28: "To receive the award, an organization must have a registration with NGOAB and must be eligible for receiving foreign assistance funds within a reasonable time frame." To comply with this requirement, WildTeam applied in a timely manner for the NGOAB registration. Accordingly, WildTeam was successfully registered with NGOAB, and applied for NGOAB approval for the project including the receipt of its associated foreign funds that in turn was received from the NGOAB on 12 March 2014. WildTeam applied to USAID for funds on 20 March 2014 and received the first installment from the USAID on 16 April, 2014.

Subsequently WildTeam signed sub-award agreement with the BCAS on 12 May 2014. In the meantime, the foreign currency transaction issue surfaced when it was realized by

both USAID and WildTeam that affiliation with NGOAB would result in an inability to transfer grant funds back out of Bangladesh once received in country. It was also unclear whether the project was covered by DOAG or approval of NGOAB would be needed. This delayed start-up for the subawardee, Smithsonian Institution (and thus hiring and fielding of the Deputy Chief of Party and the Wildlife Technical Specialist) in addition to not permitting WildTeam to pay the former COP's salary. WildTeam had to request and confirm with the NGOAB that they may withdraw their request for registration to pursue the need to pay Smithsonian through their US bank account and pay for an expatriate COP.

WildTeam proceeded to resolve this issue in consultation with USAID and NGOAB to reach a consensus. Accordingly, it was concluded that NGOAB affiliation would be withdrawn and Bagh Activity would be covered under DOAG. It took some time for NGOAB to inform that 'withdrawal' was an option in a meeting between WildTeam and NGOAB where the AOR was present. Immediately after that WildTeam submitted their application for withdrawal on 22 June 2014. After a long process involving more than 10 meetings, the NGOAB withdrawal was enforced on 12 August 2014. This then paved way for the smooth operations of the Bagh Activity.

WildTeam did receive a cure notice from USAID on July 27, 2014. In this cure notice, USAID highlighted issues regarding timely implementation of Bagh. WildTeam acknowledged the cure notice and proactively provided actionable items that they had put in place and were putting in place to rectify USAID's concerns in a detailed letter on August 26, 2014.

Bagh sub-awards: The Bagh Activity has two Sub awardees: The Smithsonian Institute (SI) and the Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies (BCAS). During Quarter 1, WildTeam reviewed and draft agreements for both subawardees based on the prime agreement signed between the USAID and WildTeam. A number of meetings were held with the two sub-awardees to finalize draft sub-agreements including obligated amounts within the overall budget and the sub-award period as per the prime agreement.

BCAS recruited and hired the Gender Specialist and M&E Specialist in Quarter 3. Smithsonian received the green light to move forward with fielding their two long termers in August 2014. Smithsonian sent a start-up specialist and their Conservation Specialist in Quarter 3 to assist with start-up activities and technical strategy sessions with the Forest Department. Smithsonian's long-termers, the Deputy Chief of Party and the Wildlife Technical Specialist, joined the team in Dhaka in November and December of 2014, respectively.

Project Launch: At the national level, after several consultations with FD and GTI, Bagh project was launched on 15th September 2014 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on the same time period as the 2nd stocktaking meeting of GTI. The Bagh Communications team developed the Bagh launching plan and meeting logistic partners during this quarter. (Refer to the Communications Section for more detail.)

3. Enhanced buy-in and close coordination with Forest Department (FD)

From the onset, Bagh Activity team understood that for the smooth implementation and success of the project, it was important that the FD be fully aware of the project objective and activities as well as the need to set up an effective coordination and communication mechanism. There were various meetings held at Dhaka and field level to ensure this.

Immediately after the cooperative agreement was signed, a meeting was held at the Forest Department main office in Ban Bhavan in Dhaka on 13th January 2014 that was chaired by the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) and participants included USAID representatives, senior FD officials and the Bagh team. During the meeting, the Bagh team made a presentation on the project objectives, the planned activities and how to achieve them. This meeting initiated the process of preparing the TPP along with the AWP so that the project could be included under the Forest Department's annual development plans.

After this initial meeting, throughout the first year, the Bagh team held meetings/met numerous times with senior officials of FD including the Deputy Chief Conservators of Forests (DCCFs), Conservators of Forests (CFs) and Deputy Conservators of Forests (DCFs) to finalize the Staff Appraisal Report, the TPP, the Annual Work Plan and specific implementation of activities under each main Component.

The signing of the TPP and its onward submission for the final approval to MoEF was a milestone that was achieved during quarter 2. This was achieved as a result of intensive consultation and coordination with the FD.

Bagh team also made similar efforts to build relationships, and engage beneficiaries and local stakeholders in the Bagh activity at the field level. Several consultations were held with beneficiaries and stakeholders to orient them of Bagh objectives and planned activities to achieve them. The team also worked with relevant FD staff and its own team to complete the AWP design and building relationship with local stakeholders.

The Bagh team strongly believes that the above mentioned initiatives were instrumental in building the initial momentum of the project, starting and strengthening key relationships, and ultimately ensuring ownership of the Bagh Activity by the Forest Department. More details on Bagh's coordination with the Forest Department can be found throughout the Component details.

4. Preparation of AWP, SAR and TPP

The Annual Work Plan (AWP), Staff Appraisal Report (SAR) and Technical Project Performa (TPP) were three documents that needed to be completed before the Bagh activity could start its field activities.

WildTeam started consultations in January 2014 throughout all 4 ranges with the range officers, FD officials, Co Management Committee (CMC) members and Village Tiger Response Team (VTRT) members. Subsequently, WildTeam conducted Khulna consultation sessions in February of 2014. With those inputs, the WildTeam component

teams drafted their component wise work plan, and the senior management reviewed internally, and then with the partners for one final review. The final version was submitted within the 140 day deadline to USAID for review and approval.

In Quarter 1, Bagh worked with Forest Department field and head office officials on the finalization of the SAR, which contributed directly to the development and finalization and sign-off of the Bagh TPP by the CCF during Quarter 2.

Field implementation work started mainly during the third and fourth quarters of Year 1.

5. Design, planning and initiation of tasks and deliverables through team building to achieve the greatest possible impact

An Induction and Technical Planning Workshop for the Bagh Activity staff was held in December 2014 (Quarter 4) in Cox's Bazaar. The participants of the workshop included all the Bagh's team members, USAID AOR and AO for the Bagh Activity. The objective of the workshop was to formally introduce Bagh team members to each other, to concerned USAID staff/department (AOR and AO), increase team members understanding of the Bagh project, and contribute to Annual work plan for the second year.

During the workshop the participants were presented with information/plan on various aspects of concern to the Bagh activity i.e. presentations focused on program deliverables, Operations (policy and practices on finance, admin, HR and logistics), institution and staff capacity building, quality assurance (M&E) and cross cutting issues (gender, ICT and environment).

The workshop played a vital role in bringing the team together to work on the common goals of the Bagh project, contributed to building the team spirit, initiating understanding of USAID funding and providing a forum for WildTeam to interact with its sub-award and staff to contribute to agreed work-plan. One of the most important out-come of the workshop was it helped in building a team with common understanding and a shared vision and the donor was an integral part of the process. This, the Bagh team believes will help the project achieve the greatest possible impact.

6. Consultation and Coordination Meetings

During the first year the Bagh project engaged in numerous consultation and coordination meetings. Consultations and coordination meetings with various stakeholders and beneficiaries have played a key role in the progress so far that Bagh has achieved. These activities have made it possible for Bagh to be engaged and communicate effectively and efficiently with its stakeholders at Dhaka and field level.

As an example, timely preparation and submission of the Annual Work Plan for the second year for USAID approval could not have been possible without the Bagh project adopting a proactive effort that involved extensive consultation and coordination with its partners and stakeholders.

Similarly, Bagh team continued discussion with on-going conservation projects including CREL project, GIZ-ECA project and EU SEALS project. Field level coordination is very important with other on-going projects to identify synergies and avoid duplication. Several consultation meetings were held throughout Year one in Dhaka, Khulna and the four ranges with key local stakeholders including UP members, religious leaders, women, journalists and teachers to communicate on Bagh Project, its goals and their role in implementing the Bagh Project.

More discussions will be organized with CREL, SEALS, GiZ supported and other relevant projects to explore the opportunity to collaborate.



Field consultation meeting - Khulna range

On 16 March 2014 a consultation meeting was held in Khulna to introduce and update range level stakeholders about the components of Bagh Project, and to get their valuable insight and input regarding the project activities.

The meeting took place in Koyra Union Parishad Office of Koyra, and was attended by the Koyra Union Council Chairman, team leaders of adjacent Village Council Forum (VCF), representatives from Co-management Committee (CMC), adjacent village tiger response team (VTRT) leaders and representatives from many local NGOs.

Many important observations and suggestions related to the conservation of the Sundarbans and tigers came out of the meeting. Attendees put emphasis on controlling poaching and hunting, promoting alternative livelihood ideas in the Sundarbans, increasing cooperation between different organizations involved with conservation and implementing more awareness activities.

3.2 Component 1 Expanded Knowledge Base

The objective of Component 1 is to build and expand knowledge base about Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem, with direct implications of linking research to management interventions by conducting priority research, and developing knowledge dissemination and skills development tools.

In pursuit of developing and disseminating sound knowledge base for tiger conservation and evidence-based management interventions, information (scientific literature and reports) about Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem as tiger habitat in general and tiger conservation in particular was collected, analyzed, and categorized. Previous information database from IPAC, Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (BTAP), National Tiger Recovery Program (NTRP), BTAP Threats Assessment 2011, GoB approved Integrated Resources Management Plan (IRMP), Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan were reviewed.

Based on the collected information (scientific literature and reports), a digital bibliography of all relevant literature to Sundarbans ecosystem was prepared. This bibliography contains 1475 documents and is searchable by title, key-words, author's name, and category.

Another milestone activity for Year 2014 was a series of four consultative workshops on developing guidelines for the implementation of Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (BTAP) 2009-2017. These workshops were organized in consultation with Bangladesh forest department, community participants, and Smithsonian Institution in December 2014. The themes of these workshops were 'Threat Assessment', 'Human-Tiger Conflict Mitigation Guidelines', 'Prioritization of Research Agenda', and 'Wildlife and Habitat Monitoring Guidelines'. These workshops were meant to address information gaps to formulate future directions linked to threat assessment, to update and finalize the tiger-human conflict management guidelines, assess the priority areas of research in Sundarbans, and prepare the wildlife and habitat monitoring guidelines for Sundarbans ecosystem.

The total number of participant from various groups in these four workshops are shown in Figure 1-4. Officials from Forest Department, CMC representative from all ranges around Sundarbans, EMC representatives from selected area, Coordinator-WWF-India Sundarbans program, Regional coordinator-USAID CREL project, Relief International, Senior advisor (Sundarbans project-GIZ), Aranayak Foundation, Khulna University, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, World Bank, Country representative ZSL, King Mongkut's University of Technology, Thailand, National team leader, FAO, Columbia University, Other independent researchers and consultants participated in these workshops. Several group-discussion sessions to discuss various thematic areas were facilitated by BAGH staff during these workshop.

A nine member working group has been formed following the suggestions of the workshop participants for reviewing and finalizing the outcome of these four workshops

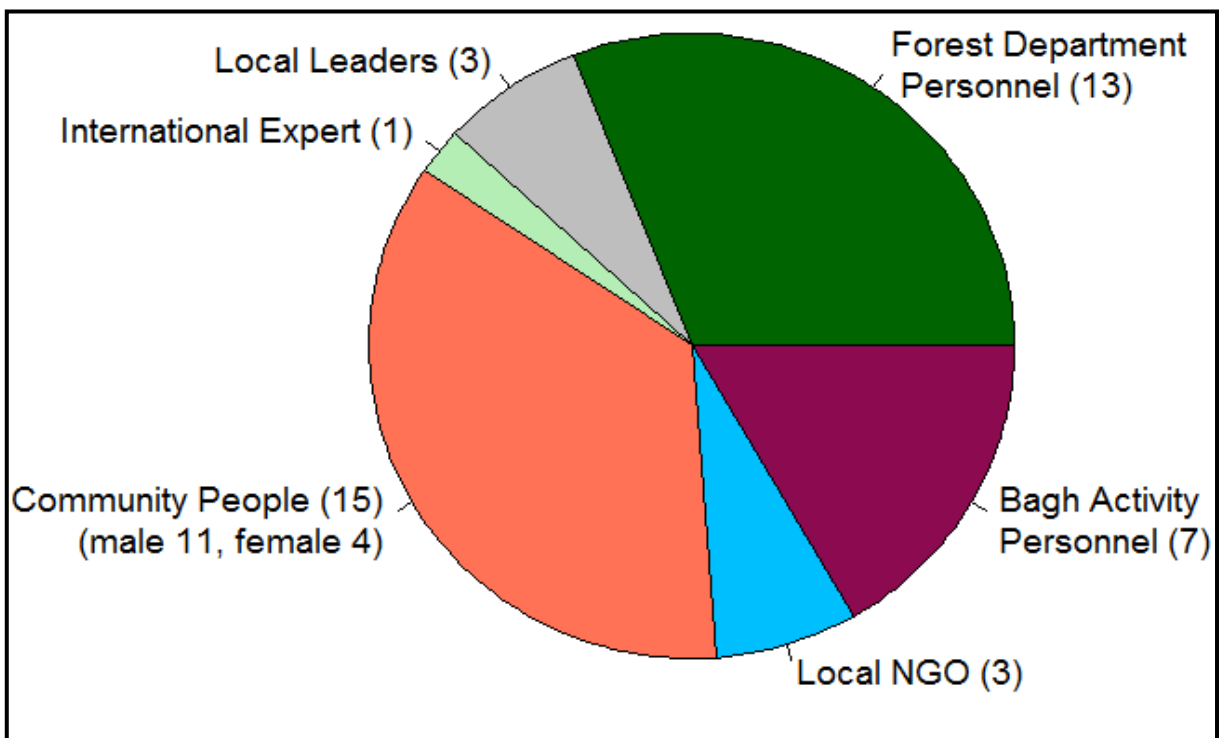
and subsequent approval by Bangladesh forest department. This working group is being chaired by Dr. Tapan Kumar Dey, Conservator of Forests, Wildlife & Nature Conservation Circle, Bangladesh Forest Department, and endorsed by the CCF in February 2015. The working group is expected to submit the workshop revised and reviewed documented by the end of Quarter 2.

Due to the delay in WildTeam able to pay Smithsonian and thus field the Wildlife Technical Specialist, the majority of Component 1's activities were pushed from Year 1 to Year 2.



Participants at one of the BTAP workshops organized in Dhaka.

Figure 1: Distribution of participants/stakeholders in threat assessment workshop



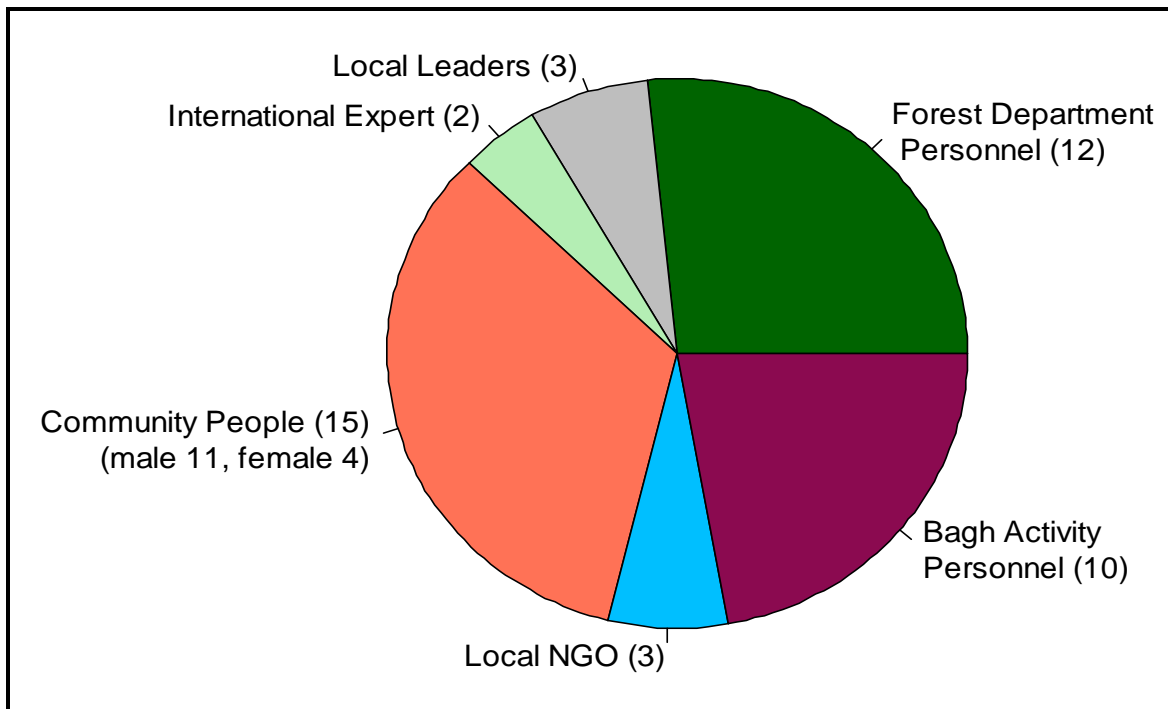


Figure 2: Distribution of participants/stakeholders in Human-tiger conflict workshop

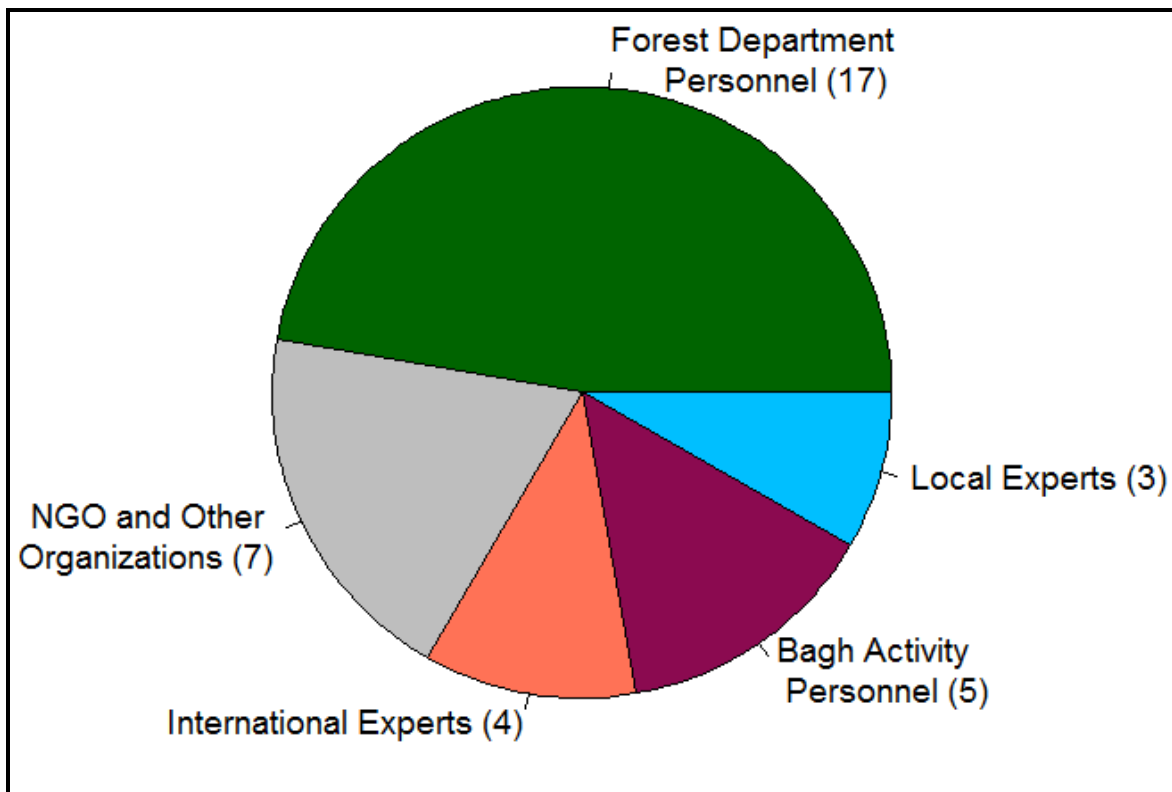


Figure 3: Distribution of participants/stakeholder in research prioritization workshop.

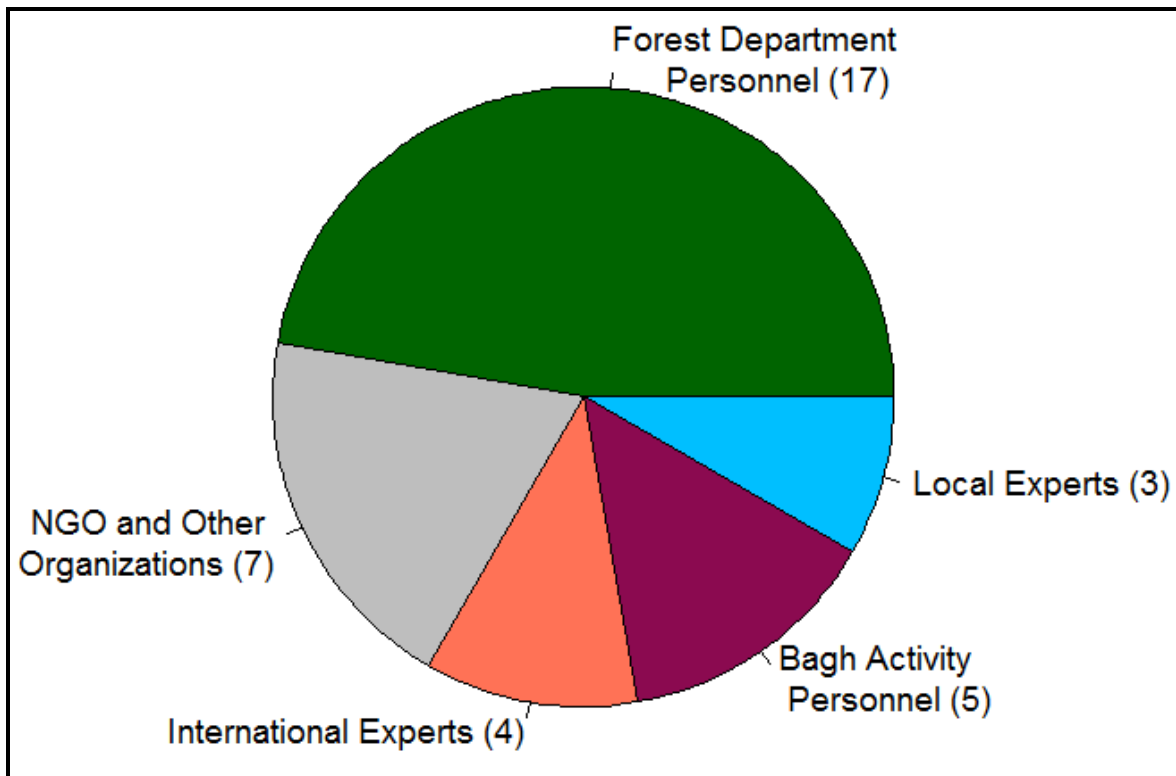


Figure 4: Distribution of participants/stakeholder in Wildlife and Habitat Monitoring Guidelines workshop.

3.3 Component 2 Reduced Illegal Wildlife Trafficking

The objective of Component 2 is to build the national capacity of the GoB and civil society to respond to wildlife trafficking and engage regional and international bodies including Bangladesh into global efforts to control wildlife trafficking.

In first year, Bagh activities focused on consultation with Forest Department, relevant Law Enforcement Agencies (Ex. BCG and BGB), potential technical partners (Ex. Panthera, UNODC, WPSI, INTERPOL, DOJ, and PACOM) to identify scope and opportunities to improve field level patrolling effort, capacity of WCCU and the area of collaborations between these stakeholders. Major focus provided in mobilizing patrolling in at least one core area. The progress and accomplishment are elaborated as per the activities under the component below:

1. Identify gaps in wildlife crime response and create realistic solutions

A meeting was held in the first quarter of the year with the UNODC visiting team (comprising officials from the UNODC head office at Geneva and regional office at New Delhi) on the ICCWC toolkit analysis recommendations and its implementation to identify scope of contribution from Bagh side to strengthen the wildlife crime response. During the year, Bagh conducted several meetings with Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Coast guards, Border Guard Bangladesh to introduce Bagh Activity and to understand the scope and opportunity for collaboration. A seminar on 'Scoping Law Enforcing Support for Tiger Conservation' was organized in December 2014 where Bangladesh Coast Guard, Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Police, and other relevant law enforcement agencies were invited to identify potential LEA stakeholders for implementation of Component 2 activities. Bagh is closely working with PACOM through USAID to establish working contacts with BCG.

2. Strengthen frontline law enforcement – government

Three meetings were held with WCCU of FD to ascertain the present status and scope of work under Bagh Activity. A concept note on training needs assessment for FD including WCCU has been drafted to identify the training needs, trainees, and technical needs. In year 2, the concept note will be finalized after discussion with FD and USAID. Once finalized, WildTeam will recruit a consultant to facilitate the TNA process in Year 2. Initial communication has been established with potential technical support partners like Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), WWF, TRAFFIC to ensure their support for conducting training in year 2 to strengthen capacity of frontline law enforcement of Bangladesh government. Bagh will facilitate the process to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure effective use of resources.

3. Strengthen frontline law enforcement – community

Bagh started communication with FD and CREL Project from early stage of the project mobilization and organized meetings regarding community patrolling initiative and inclusion of VTRT and FTRT in CMCs. A community patrol strategy for FTRT has been developed and basic training on community patrolling, first aid and evacuation has been

organized for the FTRT in the November and December 2014. After the training, FTRT patrolling has been mobilized according to the community patrolling strategy. A briefing with BCG and BGB has been organized for the FTRT in Satkhira range to share FTRT patrolling objectives and building relationship with the agencies to harness support in emergency situation.

4. Roll out a strengthened patrol monitoring system in the Sundarbans

During the second quarter of the first year, Bagh's cost share partner Panthera team visited Bangladesh Sundarbans, and several meetings to understand the current situation of patrol monitoring in Sundarbans was conducted with the FD. As a result of these consultations, CCF agreed the formation of a working group comprising of DFOs and the WildTeam members who will plan and implement a field patrolling monitoring system for Satkhira range. Over the year the working group held several meetings and developed an implementation plan for strengthening protection of West Sanctuary and Satkhira Range of the Sundarbans Reserve Forest. The CCF provided his endorsement via email of the patrolling action plan in December. Immediately, the working group started the design and implementation of the action plan including formation of patrol teams, selection criteria of the team members, logistics support, data sharing modalities, and in December, Bagh initiated the procurement process for two patrol boats and other patrolling equipment. Bagh cost share partner Panthera provided funds for the procurement of equipment and sharing cost of patrol boats.

In the last quarter of year one, the team also initiated consultation with WWF-Malaysia, WCS and Panthera to explore the scope and opportunity for common approach of patrolling in the Sundarbans and developed a common data set for the patrolling to collect similar type of information on biodiversity monitoring and threats so that data can be compared/analyzed between two sites eg. with West Sanctuary to East Sanctuary. This is to avoid continuing different approaches in different sites of Sundarbans and among the technical agencies.

5. Develop national enforcement response

During the first quarter, Bagh's cost share partner, Panthera mobilized a Law Enforcement Specialist to support anti-trafficking planning and capacity building process. The Specialist provided training on wildlife crime information management to Bagh field staff; updated the Tiger hotline management guideline; and trained the Community Actions and Anti Trafficking Action team members of Bagh. During the first year, the team collected, collated and stored data received from the Tiger Hotline for further analysis. These information were used to update the wildlife crime database and to produce regular wildlife crime information report.

6. Build regional collaboration and capacity

To further increase the FD capacity to address anti trafficking activities, Bagh initiated meetings with the CCF and other senior officials of FD to discuss the opportunity of cross site visits in Nepal and India. The cross visits will expose the senior officials and Bagh staff the current best practices existing in the tiger countries to combat wildlife crime and build regional collaboration. The CCF welcomed the cross site visit idea and as a result Bagh has

started the cross site visit plan and communication with the Nepalese (Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation/Government of Nepal) and Indian counterparts (WPSI, WWF India and GTF).

The main activities from Year 1 that shifted to Year 2 include using the training needs assessment to provide sufficient feedback for FD's and Bagh's capacity building approach to the forest department; the cross site visit to India. The activity to initiate bilateral communication between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar has since been removed from the Bagh work plan.

3.4 Component 3 Minimized Human-Wildlife Conflict

The main objective of this component is to prevent human-wildlife conflict, reduce fatalities and the number of new tiger widows, and to provide relief to victims. This will be achieved by facilitating community based solutions that have the best chance of success and sustainability. Initially, Bagh will focus on building on the on-going VTRT and FTTRT initiatives and expand in the subsequent years to include other relevant groups in line with the scope of work of the project.

1. Reduce human-wildlife conflict outside the forests

During the first year, the 49 VTRTs and one FTTRTs created by the WildTeam continued to operate and assist FD to manage human-tiger conflicts from the beginning of the project. The VTRTs organized regular monthly meetings to reflect on their activities and learning, and Bagh field staff attended CMC's monthly meetings in Sundarbans ranges to understand and share their experiences wherever appropriate.

The Bagh project conducted a survey to assess the social acceptance of FTTRT and their effectiveness. The survey data was analyzed and a draft report has been enclosed (Annex II). Similarly, another report was also produced identifying areas of improvement of VTRT based on the findings of an assessment survey of VTRTs' current status, skills and their social acceptance (Annex III). The team also started the procurement process for a new boat and equipment for FTTRT in the fourth quarter of the year (as mentioned under Component 2).

In the first quarter, Bagh field staff familiarized with the CMOs in the four sites by attending their monthly meetings. Initial meetings were held with CREL both at the Dhaka level and regional level to analyze the scope of integrating VTRTs and FTTRTs in CMC structure. Bagh and CREL identified few areas of potential collaboration or coordination like CMC-VTRT linkage establishment, livelihood approach and beneficiaries, and M&E approach. Also, both projects agreed to organize regular Dhaka and Regional level meetings.

In addition, the Bagh field team assisted FD to rescue an injured tiger on 7 Feb 2014 from Khulna range.

2. Adopt sophisticated tools for conflict prediction

The team continued collection of regular Human-Tiger conflict (HTC) data and on a monthly basis updated the HTC database. HTC reports has been produced and disseminated to FD and relevant stakeholders. A yearly report on HTC is under preparation and will be submitted to USAID once it is final.

In December 2014, the consultative workshops on developing guidelines for the implementation of Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (BTAP) 2009-2017 was held. A draft Human Tiger Conflict (HTC) management guideline was developed that was reviewed by the workshop participants including FD, local and International NGOs, and the local community representatives eg. CMC and VTRT members. These reports and guidelines once finalized will be shared with USAID.

3. Equip communities to prevent and deal with the consequences of attacks

Bagh team members participated and joined the Honey Fair on 1 April 2014, organized by FD in Burigualini Range. The CF of Khulna Circle was the Chief Guest of that ceremony. During the fair WildTeam provided safety training to the honey collectors. USAID funds were not used to support this activity.

The main activities under Component 3 that were shifted from year one activities to year two include the following: the development of HTC management guidelines, including the conflict prediction model.

3.5 Component 4 Enhanced Communications, Outreach, and Gender Engagement

Under this component, Bagh is addressing tiger-human conflicts and human threat to biodiversity by implementing communication, outreach, partnerships, youth and gender engagement activities that will contribute to behavioral change of the local communities and other stakeholders. Bagh is focusing on building upon the “Mother-like Sundarbans” campaign that was started by WildTeam before Bagh by reconnecting various categories of audiences with the Sundarbans ecosystems and landscapes to inspire them to play vital role in conserving biodiversity including tigers for present and future generations. Recognizing that the threats to the Sundarbans and the tigers; are directly linked to human behavior, was the key message of the WildTeam’s Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) outreach strategy for organized public outreach campaigns back in 2012. The goal of the campaign is to focus on targeted communities immediately adjacent to the Sundarbans periphery through grass root level interactive activities to reduce deer meat consumption; reduce deer poaching; and reduce stray tiger killing. This is a five-phase behavior change campaign. WildTeam has completed the first phase: the Ownership Campaign, which built on the emotional connection to animals and the forest. Bagh will move forward with CEPA’s Phase 2, the Commitment Campaign in Year 2 of the Bagh.

1. Bagh Activity launching

The Bagh activity was launched on 15th September 2014 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on the same time period as the 2nd stocktaking conference of GTI. The Bagh Communications team was active and responsible for the successful launching ceremony. The team developed the Bagh launching plan, arranged all the logistics and ensured that proper marking and branding was in place as per the Bagh Cooperative Agreement and the USAID requirements.

Honorable Minister of Environment and Forests Mr. Md. Anwar Hossain Manju and U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Honorable Dan W Mozena jointly launched the project. The Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests, USAID Mission Director and Chief Conservation of Forest were present during the launching ceremony.

2. Positive behavior change at the community level

Several consultation sessions were held in the four ranges of Sundarbans to discuss goals and activities of Bagh with key local stakeholders like women, teachers, journalist, religious leaders and political leaders. The brand ambassadors' workshop was organized and village forum has been piloted in quarter four. The stakeholder engagement plan for "Mother-like Sundarbans' phase 2 (commitment campaign) has been developed. Commitment campaign message and outdoor branding plan and design has been completed and production is in progress. The goal for this phase is to ask for small public commitments of behavioral change in relation to the priority behaviors of not killing deer or stray tiger, nor eating deer meat.

3. Engage in national and international awareness-raising campaigns

The Bagh communication team was also engaged in numerous activities that contributed to national and international awareness raising campaigns.

During the first year, the communication team was engaged in developing the Bagh brief document, Bagh video promo (which was released during the Bagh launching ceremony), Bagh webpage content (which is published on the WildTeam website), and drafting the Bagh communication strategy. An extensive consultative process was followed when developing the communication strategy involving our partners and donor, the USAID. The draft strategy is in line with the Branding & Marking Plan of the Cooperative Agreement and is envisioned as an evolving document to be modified with the project requirements. Bagh plans to complete it by the 2nd quarter of Year 2. The communication strategy will guide some of the proposed communication approaches during the national and internal/local field level campaigns as well as the marking and bringing guidelines, which will be followed in the campaign designs.

In addition, the Bagh team participated in various celebrations organized by FD such as the International Forestry Day, World Wildlife Day, World Migratory Bird Day, and Global Tiger Day in Dhaka and Khulna level.

The Bagh also provided support to USAID's biodiversity filming at Munshigonj, Satkhira and participated in USAID biodiversity filming training during July and August 2014. The

USAID biodiversity film was released by USAID for national and international audience at the Bagh launching event.

4. Build capacity of civil society and NGOs for awareness-building on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

A draft concept note has been developed for Bagh PPP approach and primary scope for BAGH PPP activity has been identified. PPP Strategy is planned to be finalized by the end of the 1st quarter of Year 2. Further consultation will be conducted with Bagh technical teams and senior management to develop Bagh PPP strategy with support from STTAs.

5. Strengthen gender and youth engagement for sustainable adoption of conservation measures

In the first year, an internal Bagh gender policy was drafted based on the consultations with USAID and the CREL project. The policy will create the Bagh Gender Approach that is scheduled to be finalized by the 1st Quarter of Year 2. Additionally, under NKC, a youth engagement activity plan has been developed and implementation started from December 2014. As part of youth engagement under the Wild Learning Center/NKC, an event styled as 'WildHour: Heaven of Green' on biodiversity issues was organized with the participation of NKC members who are new generation youth. Gender and youth engagement is a cross-cutting activity in Bagh. The NKC serves as a platform to inspire and engage young people in conservation by offering nature treks, debates, guest talks and access on-line and book-based resources.

Note: Photo stories of some key activities carried out by the communication team has been included in Annex IV.

Component 4's activities that were not achieved in Year 1 and shifted to Year 2 include rebranding the outdoor signboards for the community campaign; the Mayer Moton boat exhibition; the Bagh webpage development; the plan and design for PPP scopes under Bagh; the development of the outreach plan through the Wild Learning Centre; and initiate the quarterly assessment of progress against Bagh's gender mainstreaming plan.

3.6 Component 5

During this year, the Bagh team initiated technical discussions with relevant projects, such as EU SEALS and USAID's CREL program, to understand and review their ongoing and planned livelihoods activities.

Throughout quarter two, the team continued technical discussions with the field team of CREL, Concern Worldwide, CODEC, GIZ Relief International, World Vision and FD to understand the current efforts on livelihood in Sundarbans area and potential scope of work for the Bagh Activity. A collection of literature on livelihoods in and around the Sundarbans was reviewed in Quarter 3 with the Bagh team at the time in hopes that BCAS's livelihoods specialist would begin prior to Quarter 4. BCAS went through a competitive recruitment process to find a suitable candidate for the livelihoods specialist with a detailed scope of work that outlined the expected outcomes from year one's annual

work plan. WildTeam and BCAS requested candidates from the Forest Department to further link the project to the Forest Department as a partner as well as receive insights from the perspective of a Forest Department employee. Conversely, the employee would gain perspective from Bagh and increase his capacity throughout his work on the project. Unfortunately, there were government delays in hiring the seconded livelihoods specialist until early in Year 2. Therefore, Bagh was not able to begin any field-level livelihood work in Year One.

However, given all the challenges, the Bagh senior management team was able to reviewed numerous existing literature on the Sundarbans livelihoods and value chain analyses, including the value chain studies conducted under IPAC, the eco-tourism promotion and the visitor management program as recommended in the Sundarbans IRMP.

The activities that were not completed in Year 1 and shifted to Year 2 include all Component 5 activities except for the consultation with other donor project to collect information on current AIG activities and plans in the periphery of the Sundarbans.

4 Learning and Challenges

Bagh Project aims to ensure the effective conservation of Bengal Tiger's and their habitat while simultaneously building human resources, institutional capacity and financial systems to sustain the results in the long run. Therefore, some issues that caused adverse effect to the program and requires understanding are highlighted below:

- The former COP, Mr. Ram Sharma, resigned on June 27, 2014 due to salary payment and tax issues. This created two challenges for WildTeam: (1) WildTeam had to temporarily fall back on one of its national staff (although this was a unique and temporary opportunity to build capacity of the concerned national staff) to shoulder the responsibilities prior to a new COP being assigned. This slowed down the implementation process; and (2), as this was the first time WildTeam had hired an expatriate regular staff, it was not well versed in issues related to tax exemptions approval, the general project approval process. Had we been able to assure Mr. Sharma that he will get his taxes returned, Mr. Sharma might not have resigned. WildTeam is working diligently to resolve this issue for its current expatriate staff by trying to push the TPP forward for approval, in addition to contacting the MoEF directly to see if anything can be done for this, and visa challenges that have arisen.
- WildTeam initially requested to be registered under NGOAB and found out later that this would not permit them to reimburse Smithsonian or the (former) COP's salary in USD. They withdrew their request, which took several months, delaying the fielding of the DCOP and WTS senior staff and Smithsonian's work on the project.
- The senior staff and key personnel to the Bagh project did not start until Quarter 3 and 4 of Year 1. The protracted long vacuum in leadership affected the timely implementation and quality of the program. Once the senior management team was in place, many of the activities from year one's work plan were started and continue to move forward.

- The visa and customs clearance issues began in Year 1 (and continued in Year 2). Without long term visas in place for the expatriate senior management team, some of the team members must leave the country, which disrupted implementation, costing money to WildTeam and Smithsonian's overhead accounts. While WildTeam works with MoEF directly to see if they can push the visa requests forward, they are looking into options for longer short-term visas to avoid the Bagh expatriate staff leaving the country every month/every other month due to the visa constraints.
- Though all the financial and administrative manuals were initially developed in the first half of Year 1, the implementation of the manuals has proven that few revisions are required to ensure effective implementation and compliance under USG-funding. This means templates also need to be revised, and guidelines should be provided to ensure clarity and compliance in the different processes. Bagh's DCOP, UNOPS and WildTeam UK are collaborating to put in place systems, updated policies, templates, guidelines and procedures for all offices and team working streams to provide adequate support and trainings and to ensure WildTeam's capacity is built in project management, as well as how to effectively implement Bagh and future conservation projects.
- Time and again it has been proven that effective communication and coordination amongst partners can help solve problems related to the program and implementation as well as build better relationships between WildTeam and its partners. This has resulted in outlining roles, responsibilities and expectations of WildTeam, its subawardees and of all staff members. WildTeam has also started an orientation and induction package for new staff joining the program so they are apprised of WildTeam as an organization and the objectives of Bagh. This practice will be continued in the remaining years of the Bagh project.
- The vacuum in leadership has affected the TPP approval process. The Bagh Project TPP was signed by the CCF in Quarter 2 and submitted to MoEF for approval, but has yet to be approved. The COP has taken the lead to ensure this is handled, and in effect, has had multiple meetings and functioned as the liaison to keep the process moving forward.
- The Annual Work Plan for the first year was approved in August 2014 but field implementation was not possible due to the major focus on placing and mobilizing the senior management team. Once the senior management team was in place, we coordinated an all staff workshop to ensure everyone's understanding of the project, how USAID projects are managed and the expectations from our partners, the Bangladesh Forest Department and USAID. Thereafter, the senior management team has successfully moved a number of the activities from year one's AWP forward.
- During the year some scheduled activities had to be adjusted due to the ongoing political turbulence in the country. Bagh took an active role to ensure the safety and security of its team members and tried when possible to work around the political instability.
- Delay in the fielding of the Wildlife Technical Specialist was a major challenge for Component 1 and during his absence lack of sufficient staff to support this component. There were only two staff for almost an entire year. Despite this, Smithsonian

Institution was able to provide timely STTAs to provide technical advice to organize the BTAP workshops.

- In Year One, Bagh's Annual Work Plan discussed engaging specific Law Enforcement Agencies; USAID clarified to Bagh that working with LEAs under USG funding is sensitive, and as such, a process for receiving clearance was enacted. This put an unanticipated delay in the work plan timeline, but also supported Bagh to clarify the expectations of the LEAs, and bring certain key players to the table at a higher level of engagement than previously considered
- Not having a named Project Director from the Forest Department has been challenging for the implementation of Bagh as this position is responsible for proactively coordinating with the CCF and other key officials to mobilize key activities (i.e., patrolling activities). The TPP approval and having a permanent Project Director from FD would resolve the issue and strengthen the FD coordination overall for successful implementation. Bagh continues to pursue the TPP approval in a proactive manner.
- It took more than expected time to get the livelihood specialist hired and working on the project. The specialist is a FD staff and it took time to get him seconded to the project. This affected coordination with other relevant projects like CREL, SEALs and projects of GIZ, which was required to initiate the Bagh Livelihoods Approach. In the absence of the livelihood specialist, Bagh coordinated with the other projects to receive their information so that the livelihoods specialist could hit the ground running and commence the desktop study as soon as he arrived.

4.1 Annex I: List of Deliverables

- HR handbook was updated on 29 May 2014
- HR Manual was updated on 29 May 2014
- Procurement Manual was updated on 29 May 2014
- Finance Manual was updated on 29 May 2014
- Grants Manual was updated 29 May 2014
- Project Management Manual

4.2 Annex II: Report on FTRT social acceptance and effectiveness survey 2014

4.3 Annex III: VTRT experience and status survey report_2014_Final

4.4 Annex IV: Photo Stories



Field activities began by organizing workshops with the influential people of Sundarbans. The commitment campaign will be rolled out throughout the life of the project in phases, including choosing the ambassadors who are affectionately known as 'Baghbondhu' in their areas. The ambassadors will lead targeted community level campaign activities to spread the message in their communities and make people committed for saving Sundarbans and tigers.

In Year one, the commitment campaign workshops were arranged in two phases. In the first phase, 29 workshops were arranged in four ranges with the representation of around 450 people. Among these attendees, Bagh selected those who were found proactive, motivated and enthusiastic to work as volunteers for saving Sundarbans for the 2nd phase of the workshops. Six workshops were held in the 2nd phase in all four ranges and total 128 people attended those workshops. All the workshops were completed by October 2014.



A consultation meeting between the FD and Bagh Project representatives took place on 20 March 2014 in the office of the Conservator of Forests, Khulna. The purpose of the meeting was communicating the project components and activities to the FD, and receiving their feedback on preparation of the TPP and AWP. The meeting was chaired by the CF of Khulna Circle, and attended by all Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) based in Khulna. The Sundarbans and Range Officers of Khulna, Satkhira, Chandpai and Sharankhola ranges.



USAID's Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity (Bagh) was launched on Monday, aiming to protect the Bengal Tiger, one of the critically endangered species, and the ecosystem of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest.

Environment and Forests Minister Anwar Hossain Manju and US Ambassador in Dhaka Dan W Mozena officially launched the Bengal Tiger Conservation Activity at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital in the evening.

Environment and Forests Secretary Mr. Nojibur Rahman, CCF Mr. Yunus Ali and USAID Mission Director Janina Jaruzelski also spoke at the launching ceremony. UNB Editor-in-Chief Enayetullah Khan moderated the session.

The Sundarbans is one of the largest strongholds of tigers in the world. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has joined hands with the government of Bangladesh to protect wild tigers in Bangladesh through the Bagh Activity.

The Bagh Activity will work on making the relationship between the Sundarbans and the adjacent communities stronger and safer by empowering communities and institutions in taking ownership of protecting the majestic Bengal tiger and its magnificent forest home.

Starting in 2014 and completing in 2018, the Bagh Activity will be implemented by WildTeam, and technically supported by the Smithsonian Institution and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) under the leadership of Bangladesh Forest Department.